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SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD
LONDON FOR ERELI
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OIIP KMDR TC
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NEW STRATEGY FOR IRAQ

¶1. Summary: "Al-Khaleej" views Bush's new strategy for Iraq as inverted logic. The editorial notes that the president has lost his credibility and that no one inside or outside of Iraq is willing to give him a hand. "Al-Bayan" opines that Bush ignored all advice and decided to escalate. A columnist in "Al-Khaleej" states that the only way the new strategy can be understood is that the President and his team are in a hurry because they are running out of time. "Gulf News" states that Bush's new strategy refuses to acknowledge just how serious the situation is. End Summary.

¶2. Under the headline "The up-side-down logic", Sharjah-based pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000) editorialized on 1/12:

"Bush uses an inverted logic to promote his new strategy that does not persuade his allies and at the same time does not deter his enemies. For example, he tells some Arab nations that they must realize that America's defeat in Iraq will create new areas of tension for extremists and a strategic threat to their survival. The president here forgets two important things: one is that his war against Iraq is the main reason for the present violence and extremism, and he was warned by many that his war would create problems for everyone. Yet he ignored this, hoping to reformulate a new Middle East. Second he and members of his administration urged everyone to give in to his plan for reform in the region, clearly telling that once his plans are set for Iraq, Iraq will be turned into a launching pad to topple nations and reformulate others according to his plan. He made his victory in Iraq more dangerous to regional and international regimes than his defeat. However, now he wants to convince everyone with a totally contradictory story. Bush has no credibility inside and outside of his country. Everyone in Iraq or outside is angry at his policies and skeptical of his intents. No one is willing to facilitate his mission

¶3. Another editorial in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" titled "Bush's security options in Iraq" (circulation 85,000) noted:

"The American president reiterated it yet again. All the obstacles, failure, fearful deterioration of the whole situation and all the warnings, objections and recommendations that were presented as possible breakthroughs were not enough to convince Bush change his line. He rejected all the available alternatives and decided to escalate and increase the number of his troops... Bush decided to experiment with what has been under trial. The new element is that security will be put in the hands of the Iraqis by next November. The ball is their court and only political reconciliation among the

various factions will save Iraq from a new catastrophe."

¶4. Under the headline "Bush's Plan: To throw the dice", Dr. Hassan Madan wrote in Sharjah-based pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000) 1/12:

"Bush decided to ignore all recommendations by the Baker committee and recommitted to his policy in Iraq adding more factors despite his negative assessment of the situation there holding himself responsible for all mistakes. The plan encountered a fierce campaign of criticism inside the U.S. To a great extent, it seems that President Bush and the neo conservatives behind him draw his policies in a race with time. The period left in his second term is short and this puts the team in an awkward and tough situation. It obstructs their mission in Iraq especially that they are in a hurry to direct a military strike against Iran. Bush's new policy in Iraq can only be understood in this context."

¶5. Under the headline "Bush hoisted by this own petard", Dubai-based English language daily "Gulf News" editorialized 1/12:

"Not from the Oval office but from the White House library, a chastened US president addressed his nation. Gone was the "bring 'em on" arrogance, instead an admission of mistakes but, disturbingly, there remained the refusal to acknowledge just how serious the situation is."

"Iraq was previously described by Bush as the frontline on the war on terror. Even Bush does not believe that nonsense any more, or else why the small troop surge? The 20,000 extra troops will make no practical difference to securing Baghdad, not if the numbers already there cannot. The surge - the White House cannot call it an escalation as Vietnam was "escalated" and the word is banned in White House lexicon - is a cynical ploy by an exhausted president to show he can still issue orders that contradict common sense. Bush

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has ignored the message of the mid-term elections, the Iraq Study Group, Congress, his own top generals and world opinion."

"Death squads roam Baghdad's streets. On Tuesday, a typical day, more than 40 bodies were found. This so-called surge will not change the dire situation; no death squads will halt their macabre work, the ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods will not cease. Bush has little time for history. But no other president has experienced such a wartime catastrophe since the hapless fellow Texan, Lyndon Baines Johnson, whose political reputation never recovered from Vietnam."

"The trouble is Iraq is far worse than Vietnam. America's loss of prestige in the Middle East damages it to a far greater extent than defeat at the hands of the Viet Cong. Bush's address lacked strategy and vision. Instead of engaging Iraq's neighbors he threatens them. Instead of acknowledging the collapse of order in Baghdad, he denies its severity by sending so few troops. He has spurned good advice and taken the wrong course."

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